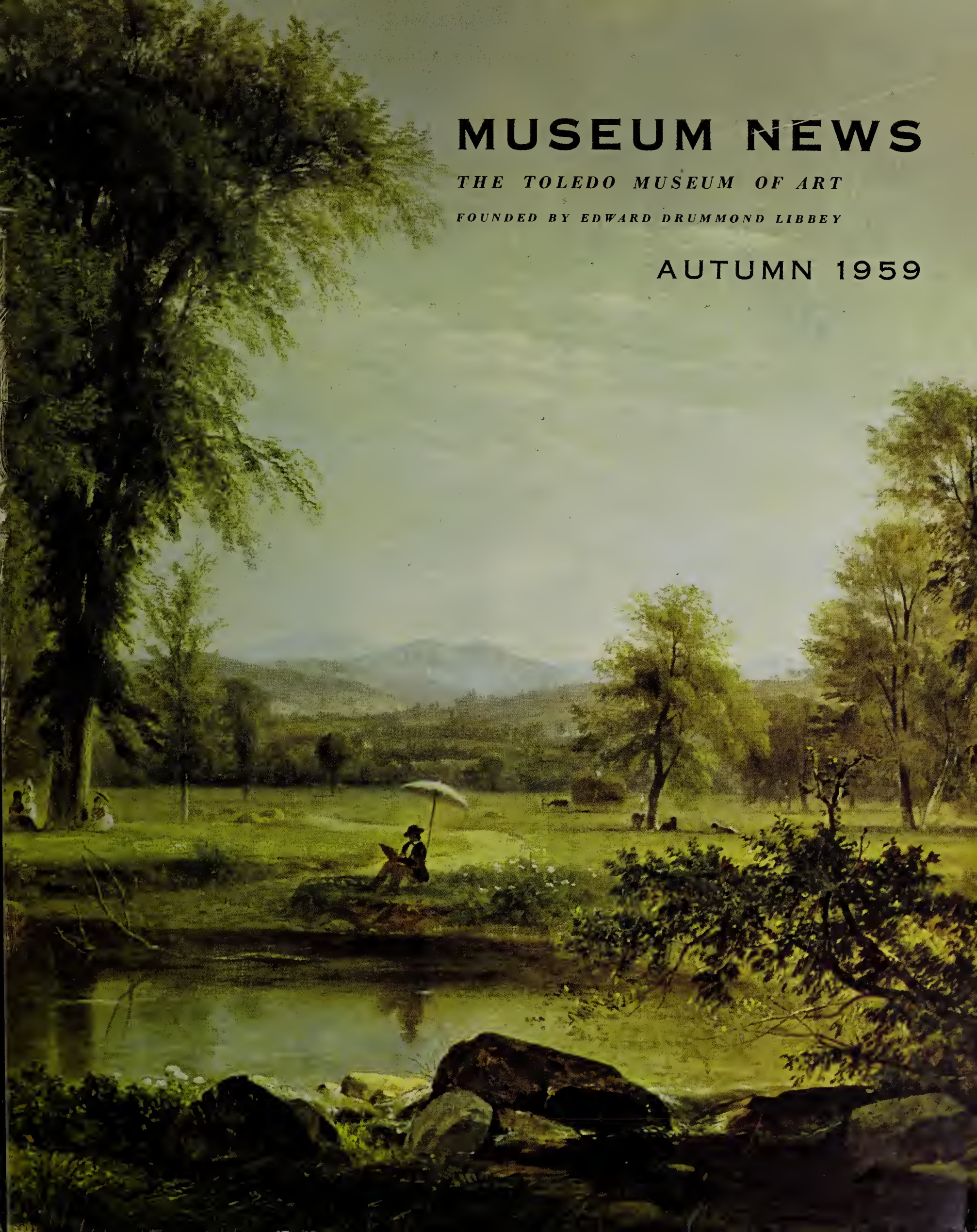
MUSEUM NEWS

THE TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART

FOUNDED BY EDWARD DRUMMOND LIBBEY

AUTUMN 1959



AMERICAN PAINTING, 1730-1860

The history of painting in our country is necessarily a very brief one in comparison with that of any other great nation. For we are a young country, and much of the energies of the early generations of Americans was needed to provide the basic necessities of life.

Yet, from the beginning, art was practised, often under considerable hardships and seldom with any very secure patronage or encouragement. Long before we declared our independence, there were in the larger cities of the colonies artists capable of producing excellent portraits; while in the farther reaches of this new continent, explorers frequently included in their parties an artist to record this extraordinary land and its native inhabitants, the American Indians.

American painting, like most other aspects of our culture, is a continuation of the great traditions of western Europe. Even after we declared our political independence, we continued cultural ties with Europe. As American artists grew in number, gained prestige and a measure of security in the first half of the 19th century, they continued to look to Europe for technique and inspiration. At the same time they used for their subject matter landscape and people from their native land.

This issue of the *Museum News* is devoted to the American paintings in this Museum, from 1730 to 1860. A subsequent issue will bring the story to the present day. This Museum has from its beginning collected American paintings. It was one of Mrs. Edward Drummond Libbey's great interests. Thanks to her generosity, most of the paintings illustrated here were acquired from funds provided by her to provide galleries of American painting, named in honor of her father, Maurice A. Scott.

Otto Wittmann, Editor

MUSEUM NEWS

THE TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART

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AUTUMN 1959 ***New Series: Volume 2, Number 2***

This is the first issue of the Museum News published since Vol. 2, No. 1, Spring 1958.

COVER: ASHER B. DURAND. *Artist Sketching in a Landscape (Detail). Oil on canvas. 26 x 40 inches. Gift of Florence Scott Libbey, 1947.*

JOHN SMIBERT. *Portrait of Mrs. Nathaniel Cunningham. Oil on canvas. Gift of Florence Scott Libbey, 1948. 50 x 40 inches.*

OUR COLONIAL HERITAGE

Who were the English Colonists who painted faces in "this most howling wilderness?" Usually they were the same men who painted fire buckets and barns and tavern signs. Happily ignorant of "correct" ways of drawing, as practiced in fashionable London studios, they relied on their own immediate observation of each individual sitter. Characteristics of these portraits are flatness of image, sharpness of outline, emphasis on pattern, and rigidly frontal poses. Equally significant, they bear the mark of Dutch provincial portraiture that had been carried to England. This accounts for their straightforwardness and portrayal of character.

This love of exact truth, however, did not continue unchanged. Prospering in "honourable trade," American merchants had a look at fashionable portraiture in England. No more could the self-taught limner paint the merchant families as they appeared to him. He now had to represent them as elegantly as the aristocracy he had never seen.

When John Smibert (1688-1751) came to America from Scotland in 1729, Boston was ready for the flamboyant mode of the London School. Smibert followed in the wake of the late Baroque style, as formulated in England by Sir Godfrey Kneller. Second-rate in London, Smibert displayed a competence rarely known in New England before his arrival.

Smibert's *Portrait of Mrs. Nathaniel Cunningham*, painted about 1733, is not only a typical example of his decorative style, but a clear illustration of the mingling of the art of the people with the art of the privileged few. American sitters, like the English, too often fled the painting room as soon as their faces were daubed, leaving the painter to fill out the remainder of the canvas as best he could. In the case of Mrs. Cunningham, Smibert followed an accepted method by borrowing the rest of his composition from a mezzotint by John Smith after Kneller. Thus the American head of Mrs. Cunningham rests high upon the neck and body of an English noblewoman, the Countess of Ranelagh. Mezzotints and engravings of famous men and court beauties were constant pollen carriers of the "grand style" from abroad. In the unborrowed face of Mrs. Cunningham we see the influence of plainer American realism on the Scot master.

Sometime in 1741 or thereabouts, Robert Feke, apparently a native-born American who spent his younger life at sea, made friends with John Smibert and took a good look at some of his portraits, copies, and prints. Feke's own natural talent is beautifully displayed in the *Portrait of Josiah Martin*, painted about 1748-1750. It is an admirable example of his mature style. Josiah Martin stands

ROBERT FEKE. *Portrait of Josiah Martin. Oil on canvas. Gift of Florence Scott Libbey, 1945. 50¾ x 40⅞ inches.*

JOHN SINGLETON COPLEY. *Portrait of Mary Warner. Oil on canvas. Signed lower left: "John Singleton Copley pinxit 1767." Gift of Florence Scott Libbey, 1950. 50 x 40 inches.*

JOHN GREENWOOD. *Portrait of Sarah Kilby. Oil on canvas. Gift of Florence Scott Libbey, 1951. 50 x 40 inches.*

before us as one of America's earliest successful businessmen. Assuming a traditional English pose, he lets one hand rest grandly on a slab of stone, while the other is poised in a gesture of elegant self-possession. Lacking anatomical knowledge, Feke transformed Martin into the likeness of a cone, handsomely divided into two crescents of lovely textured stuffs, velvet coat and damask vest. His face is painted as the very image of aristocracy.

With Josiah Martin, Feke portrayed an American at ease in a friendly setting over which he was master. The wilderness had been pushed a safe distance from tidewater, and a gentleman could stand with a measure of dignity, musket aside, to bask in his own glory. The ability to create a moderately round body, separated Feke's portraits from the flat patterned images of American limners before him.

Sarah Kilby, sitting bolt upright in Boston, her mouth tightly drawn, contrasts sharply with the ease with which Josiah Martin surveys the world from Long Island. Mrs. Kilby was the daughter of Mrs. Nathaniel Cunningham, and was painted by young John Greenwood (1727-1792) about 1752. This portrait also appears to be a story in two parts. The body undoubtedly has an English counterpart. Above this contrivance, Sarah's own face stands out with a look of truthfulness. It is characteristic of the limner's proclivity for a strong likeness. This tradition of the people's art held Greenwood in its grasp, even while his day was marked by a growing demand for flattery and elegance.

The way in which Sarah Kilby stares directly at us, tends to deny any consciousness of her own environment. Lack of the convincing appearance of a space setting, however, only serves to emphasize the Puritan point of view in New England, which stressed the importance of the individual above everything else "in all the knowne world."

A few years after Mrs. Kilby's portrait was painted, Joseph Blackburn brought

to America an echo of the more frivolous Rococo style that had replaced the Baroque in Europe. Boston was dazzled: merchants could masquerade as up-to-date lords. However, the stupidities of the government of George III, leading to the passage of the Stamp Act in 1765, disrupted this game of charades. America's self-made men talked of independence, even revolution. The look of privilege lost its glamor; proud and prosperous Americans once again demanded that their painters show them as they were.

But the art of the people and the art of privilege had mingled too long. Finally the two produced a hybrid style, culminating in the artistic personality of John Singleton Copley (1738-1815). Copley excelled in likenesses as no other. John Adams would later say about his portraits, " . . . you can scarcely help discoursing with them . . ."

As a boy Copley had copied the prints of his step-father, Peter Pelham, the first well-trained engraver to come to America. Copley imitated briefly the styles of Boston's portraitists, including Blackburn's. He recognized that one of the Rococo forms was eminently suited to the portrayal of American character. This represents the person in his everyday life—Paul Revere handling a piece of finished silver, tools on the table before him; or young Henry Pelham, Copley's half-brother, playing with a squirrel held on a gold chain. In 1766 Copley sent this portrait of his brother to the exhibition of the Society of Artists in London. He received praise and advice from Benjamin West and Sir Joshua Reynolds. Copley determined to eliminate certain faults in his work noted by Reynolds and West when he painted the *Portrait of Mary Warner* (1767), submitted for the next London exhibition. In it he created one of the most charming studies of children in Colonial portraiture.

The child kneels at a three-quarter angle to the viewer with her arms extended. This gives an oblique axis in depth, which is repeated in the chair and the column's base behind her. The diagonal movement that results helps create a spatial setting in which we feel the girl could freely move. Mary Warner is not posed for her portrait; she is a little girl playing in her own world, conscious of her surroundings.

Since a great artist is sensitive to the point of view of his day, the style of Mary Warner's portrait has historical significance. By the 1760's much that lay beyond the horizons of Boston Harbor was forcefully crowding in upon the New England view of experience. Copley was the first American artist to discard the old formula of frontality and place his subjects consciously in the surroundings or environment that shaped their lives.

Fortunately for American painting, though he could not have realized it, Copley's *Portrait of Mary Warner* did not please the London connoisseurs so well as his first picture. He had followed nature more closely than they would have advised, for they saw in nature blemishes and defects. Copley was deeply discouraged to find he had misapplied the advice of West and Reynolds. Yet he was forced to see that painting in Boston in his own way was far better than painting by correspondence. Reynolds advised young artists to seek "the grand style," which was attained by rising "above all singular forms, local customs, particularities, and details of every kind." By contrast, the American idiom, as expressed so clearly by Copley, consisted more in capturing artistically the particularities of an individual in his human condition.

Consequently, Colonial painting, as it reached its climax prior to the Revolution in the art of John Singleton Copley, was best when it held the "grand style" in check. Then it was free to see in nature not blemishes and defects, but the beauty of its ideal—individual man.

W. Selden Washington, Jr.

JOHN TRUMBULL. *Scene from Ossian's "Fingal:" Lamderg and Gelchossa. Oil on canvas. Gift of Florence Scott Libbey, 1958. 12 x 14 inches.*

ARTISTS OF A NEW NATION

A brash, upstart nation, politically fresh in achieving her independence but weak in the resources of self-government, emerged as the United States of America in the late 18th century. With the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown in 1781 as the last major operation of the Revolutionary War, peace with Great Britain was only a matter of time. Finally, in 1783, the American tendencies toward democracy were reached and peace was formally ratified in that year.

The cauldron of destitute times was with the founders and patriots of the country until a "second war of independence" in 1812 solidified the bickering states into one national unity. A nation was moulded where none had been, and a collapsed colonialism encouraged American painters no longer to seek English models of artistic excellence. The Federal period in American art was transitional from colonialism to Romanticism; it was also the trumpeter of the worthiness of art produced by Americans.

Like many of the artists of the Federal period, John Trumbull (1756-1843) travelled freely between London's artistic circles and those of New York, Boston, Philadelphia and other American cities. He was the friend of many great men of the Revolutionary War and served as aide-de-camp for a short time to George Washington. The subject matter of his paintings was not limited. It included portraits, religious and mythological pictures, landscapes and literary themes.

Although famous for his large compositions recording events in the War of Independence, Trumbull's importance as a painter of narrative and interpreter of literature plays the prelude to Romanticism. A newly discovered painting recently acquired by the Museum, *A Scene from Ossian's Fingal: Lamderg and Gelchossa*, reflects Trumbull's early interest in the writings of James MacPherson, a brilliant

scholar of Gaelic literature who probably perpetrated the major literary hoax of the 18th century. MacPherson supposedly discovered some ancient Gaelic manuscripts by Ossian, translated them into English poetical form, and announced his discovery as the *Book of Fingal.* This work is thought to be entirely his own. Two of the main characters in *Fingal,* Lamderg and Gelchossa, were tragically involved in 3rd century Scottish history, and our painting depicts Lamderg's dying moment. A fitting musical companion to the Trumbull painting in its intensity of mood is Mendelssohn's *Fingal's Cave Overture,* written in 1830 after the composer had visited the Scottish Hebrides region.

Although lacking commissions, Trumbull was a busy artist in 1789-1794. He returned to a subject he earlier admired as a college student. In 1772 he borrowed from the Harvard College Library a book of MacPherson's *Ossian.* Surely this small canvas implies the introspection of his best period in a long career. The painting's first owner, Warren Dutton, was a friend of Trumbull and a prominent Boston art collector. His relative, Hubbard Dutton, posed for the strapping figure of Lamderg in the artist's home town of Lebanon, Connecticut, in the summer of 1792.

The figures are beautifully modelled in rich color and perfectly scaled to the landscape. In this intimate work, Trumbull blends movement and color, landscape and figure into a storytelling masterpiece. The fact that Trumbull was an accomplished landscape artist cannot be overlooked here, for each element in the stormy scene near a loch contributes to the setting's effectiveness.

Portraiture was the artist's primary employment during the Federal period, and on it hinged much of his success. Then, the preservation of one's likeness could only be realized in the portrait, while today, photography has generally replaced this need. The true likeness that presented a sitter as seen by his contemporaries was all important. Naturalism or reality was not to be tampered with.

George Washington and the new Federal society patronized an artist who travelled easily between England and America and one who had fled from his debts in Ireland. Gilbert Stuart (1755-1828) established his studio in Philadelphia when that city was the nation's capitol. From 1796 to 1805 Stuart brushed elbows with Senators, Representatives, and the socialites who named this city "the Athens of America."

Stuart never served in the Revolutionary War. He remained in England during this conflict, but persisted in his desire to paint the portrait of our first President. He accomplished this in 1795, only four years before executing the portrait in the Museum of a Philadelphia merchant, John Ashley (1754-1831). It is reasonable to assume this portrait was painted as a wedding gift for his daughter, Maria Anne, who was married that same year in Philadelphia and also sat for Stuart. The artist's talent was original and confident; his technical skill was acquired by careful study abroad and through his teachers' abilities. In the portrait of Mr. Ashley the artist's rapid painting method is illustrated. The coarse-textured canvas is covered with thin layers of pigment, and the figure was probably roughly sketched with the brush before colors were applied. Formal and reserved in pose, Stuart beautifully defines in this half-length portrait the realistic model prevalent in this country and in Europe 150 years ago. No American artist surpassed him in the keen, perceptive rendering of face and figure.

Of the artists working in the first decades of the 19th century, only John Wesley Jarvis (1780-1840) rivalled Gilbert Stuart as master of the portrait. Jarvis was the foremost artist of New York, although he ranged as far as New Orleans and Baltimore practicing his art. Born in England and related to John Wesley, the

founder of Methodism, he was brought to this country shortly after the Revolutionary War. Joviality and a disposition to notoriety affected him throughout his career, and as an ensign in the Third Regiment of the New York Infantry he must have been a rather eccentric military figure. Perhaps it was through Army connections that Major Mordecai Myers, the subject of the Jarvis portrait in the Museum, first became acquainted with the artist. In 1810, when an officer in the Thirteenth Infantry, Mordecai Myers sat for Jarvis in his New York City studio. The artist was at the peak of his career, charging $100 for a portrait of a head or $150 for the head and hands.

Firmly grasping his sword and gazing fixedly at the viewer, the friend of Aaron Burr, Martin Van Buren, and Alexander Hamilton is a handsome portrayal of an Army officer of the formative Federal years. The strength of design and vigorously applied color are characteristic of Jarvis' originality. He strayed only slightly from reality when, in this portrait of 1810, he elongated the figure and sloped the shoulders as a deft compositional trick to accent the head. As a document of the early days of the Republic, the *Portrait of Major Mordecai Myers* preserves for us the countenance of a noted man and the work of a superior artist.

The War of 1812 began disastrously and ended in a draw. It was fought over the questions of neutral rights, including the problems of search and impressment of American sailors into foreign service. Men like Oliver Hazard Perry and William Henry Harrison were the heroes it produced, while English "bombs bursting in air" over Fort McHenry in Baltimore urged Francis Scott Key to write our National Anthem. Out of this conflict grew greater national pride. The ashes of the burned capitol in Washington taught a young frontier nation the meaning and importance of unity.

WASHINGTON ALLSTON. *Italian Landscape. Oil on canvas. Signed on fountain: "W. ALLSTON. 1814." Gift of Florence Scott Libbey, 1949. 44 x 72 inches.*

JOHN WESLEY JARVIS. *Portrait of Major Mordecai Myers. Oil on wood panel. Gift of Florence Scott Libbey, 1950. 34 x 26¾ inches.*

As a major chronicler of the Federal period, John Lewis Krimmel (1789-1821) captured the vitality of America in genre scenes such as *Interior of an American Inn*, a painting left unfinished when the artist died in a drowning accident. Krimmel's vignette of life in a village tavern combines, perhaps, a temperance appeal and the announcement of the 1812 War's end. A small almanac tacked to the bar (dated 1814) and a map of the Great Lakes theatre of operations on the rear wall are pertinent clues to the scene's theme. The jubilant figures at the door bearing mail pouches are thought to be bringing the news of the signing of peace. Although the original title is unwieldy, the painting was exhibited one year after Krimmel's death with the caption that appropriately indicates its theme: "A Village Tavern—The Arrival of the Mail with the News of Peace, 1815." American genre scenes, so appealing to his observant nature, were genially regarded by Krimmel and painted with a twinkle in his eye. Merriment and good times prevail in his art.

Washington Allston (1779-1843) was a man of staggering ambition. He was philosopher, poet, visionary, and America's first Romantic artist. With his work we are ushered into an Arcadian world of dramatic storytelling and the moody passions of the Romantic age. And with him, too, American art assumed the breadth and scope that expanded it so rapidly from the confines of colonialism to the 19th century pace.

While recuperating from an illness in 1813-1814, Allston lived in Bristol, England, near his uncle who was the American Consul in that city. The great poet, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who was the artist's friend, publicized an exhibition in Bristol of Allston's work, but to little avail. These were lean years. The exhibition of his paintings resulted in the sale of only a few to his uncle.

In one of these pictures, Allston filled an imagined pastoral scene suggested by his visit to Italy in 1804-1808 with luminous colors and the idyllic charm of ruins, langorous figures, and Neapolitan countryside. The ruined temple and the fountain at the right are atmospheric props in this rather wistful *Italian Landscape*. This painting expresses many shades of the incipient stages of Romanticism. The setting is foreign and full of references to Roman antiquity. Distances are vague; the landscape and figures are imaginatively handled, while the mood is one of contemplation and stilled reverie. Perhaps most impressive is his evident delight in nature and her moods. Being the first of a long line of American artists to visit Italy and to be consumed by her artistic tradition, Washington Allston also gave our country's art its first taste of Venetian concern for radiant light and coloring.

Millard F. Rogers, Jr.

JOHN LEWIS KRIMMEL. *Interior of An American Inn. Oil on canvas. Signed on table edge: "JLK." Gift of Florence Scott Libbey, 1954. 16⅛ x 22½ inches.*

RAPHAELLE PEALE. *Still Life. Oil on wood panel. Inscribed: "Painted for the Collection of John A. Alston, Esqr, the Patron of Living American Artists. Raphaelle Peale, Pinxt." Gift of Florence Scott Libbey, 1951. 18½ x 22½ inches.*

THE AGE OF GOOD FEELING

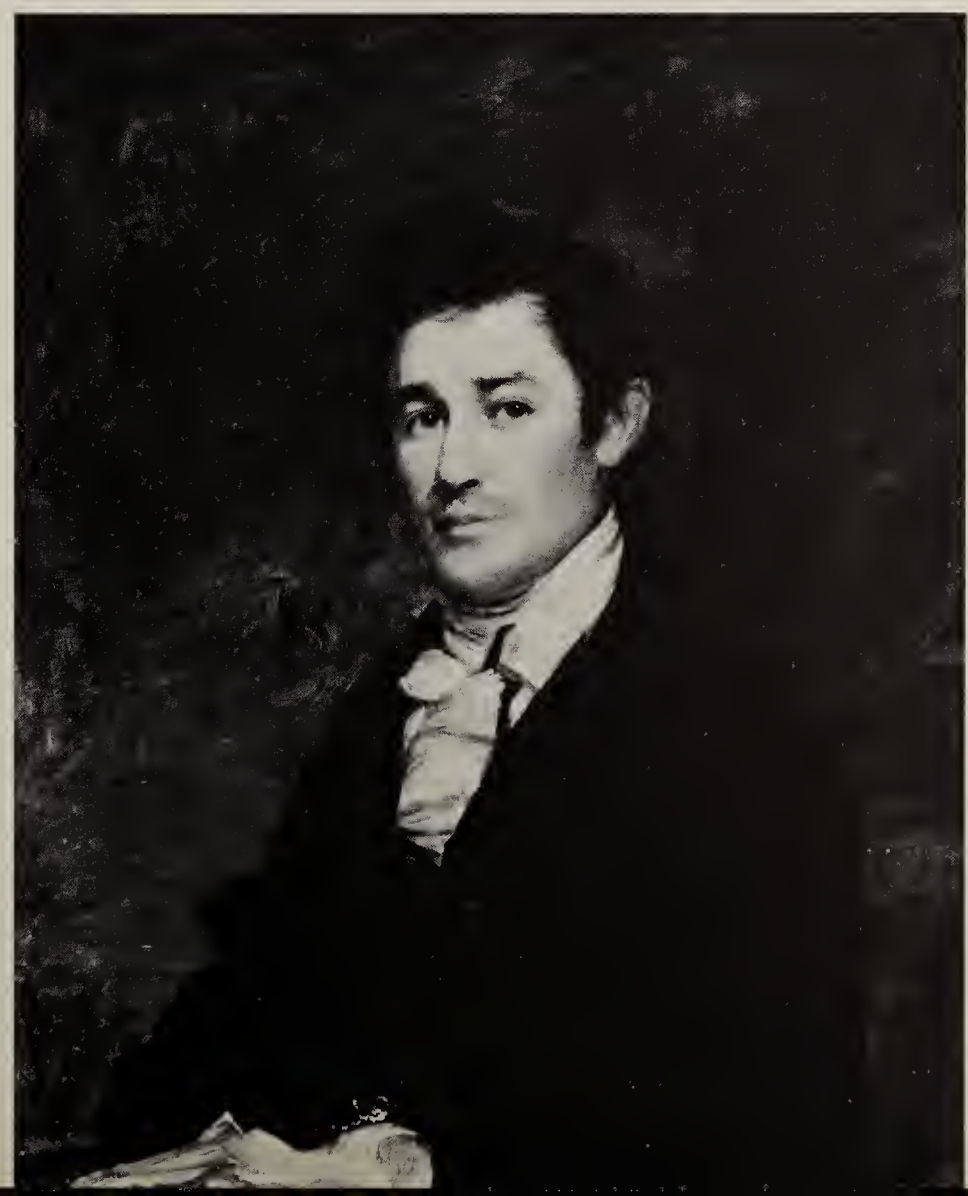
It seems paradoxical for a so-called age of good feeling to find such a complex variety of moods and emotions as depression, excitement, sentimentality, and religious fervor prevailing. Yet such was the case in the first quarter of the 19th century in the United States. The older generation still clung to their 18th century rationalism, the younger to a passion for the exploration of new fields. The self-taught limner of the 18th century was replaced in cosmopolitan centers by the young American who had studied in London, perhaps with Benjamin West, John Singleton Copley, or Washington Allston, and who was familiar with the master-

pieces in European collections through prints, if not first hand study. The Revolutionary War seemed to make little difference to most artists on either side of the Atlantic. And, although the United States and France were sympathetically allied against Great Britain, the American in London was likely to agree with Allston that French art was "corrupt," and that a thorough grounding in the English School was necessary for future work.

The country was changing rapidly, too. By 1820 Ohio was larger than Massachusetts, and twenty-seven percent of the populace lived west of the Allegheny Mountains. The returning young American might find "ceilings higher and pocketbooks fuller," but relatively little change in public taste. The portrait continued to dominate the scene.

Two of Charles Willson Peale's sons were caught in this transition. Both Raphaelle (1774-1825) and Rembrandt (1778-1860) were trained as portrait painters; Raphaelle was his father's assistant in Philadelphia. Gradually, though, Raphaelle turned away from portrait painting to a more reflective, inward looking form, the still life. Suffering from gout, alcoholism, and a shrewish wife, Raphaelle occupied himself with these "deceptions," as they were called. They show much the same love of material objects, arranged simply in a dramatic lighting, as Dutch and Flemish still life of the 17th century. In *Still Life,* recently acquired by the Toledo Museum of Art, the table edge makes a horizontal line at the bottom of the panel, and above this are placed the bowl, the oranges, grapes—all painted with a sensitive response to texture.

At the bottom of the painting is the inscription: "Painted for the Collection of John A. Alston, Esq. The Patron of Living American Artists. Raphaelle Peale, Pinxt." Mr. Alston, a wealthy plantation owner of South Carolina and a collector



SAMUEL L. WALDO. *Portrait of Asher B. Durand. Oil on wood panel. Gift of Florence Scott Libbey, 1954. 30 x 25 inches.*

SAMUEL F. B. MORSE. *Una and the Dwarf. Oil on wood panel. Gift of Florence Scott Libbey, 1951. 26¾ x 43 inches.*

of art, was a cousin of Washington Allston, the American artist.

Rembrandt Peale was the more favored of Charles Willson's sons, and his life was filled with all the success, acclaim and happiness that his brother's lacked. He had begun his study of art with his father, later travelled to London where he was one of many young American pupils of Benjamin West. Yet, in 1803 when he returned to Philadelphia it was not the elder Peale nor West that Rembrandt so closely followed in style, but Gilbert Stuart. Gone were the full and three-quarter length portraits of the 18th century, the ostentation of dress and the charming if somewhat self-conscious pose of the Federal aristocrats. The new age called for strength, sharpness, and a down-to-earth attitude toward character.

Peale made several other trips to Europe, painting portraits of illustrious men before settling in New York City in 1822. The year before he became a charter member of the American Academy of Design (founded in 1826), he painted the Museum's *Portrait of John B. Pendleton.* It is typical of his work; the pigment is laid on swiftly and fluidly, the light face stands out with strength against the dark background. What it lacks in grace it made up by a frank and exact representation of features. No ornament or jewels or overworked textures draw the eye away from the all important head.

Pendleton exhibited one of Peale's few successful ventures into history painting —his *Court of Death,* a grandiose composition, attracted 32,000 people on tour and earned $1,000. Mr. Pendleton was also instrumental in introducing commercial lithography to America. As early as 1825, illustrations for a Boston magazine were printed by him in this new, revolutionary method.

Peale worked prodigiously. When he died at age eighty-eight, the Confederacy

was being formed, Matthew Brady's photography studio was flourishing, and the younger artists were looking to Munich and Florence, rather than London, for leadership. Not only was he the last surviving artist to have painted George Washington from life, but also, one might say, he was the last surviving member of an artistic era.

Samuel Lovett Waldo returned to New York City in 1809 embued with the sobriety of West and Copley in London, and like many of his contemporaries, he found a handsome demand for the competent likeness. His work reflected, too, that of America's leading portrait painter, Thomas Sully. Even the masculine character was to be enveloped in Romanticism's elegance, sweetness, and melancholy.

One of the many younger artists that Waldo encouraged after he was established was Asher B. Durand, his junior by thirteen years. Durand's first engraving was of a painting by Waldo of an old beggar, and before he turned to the painted landscape as a leader of the Hudson River School, he made many engravings from Waldo paintings. He was about thirty-four when he sat for the Museum's portrait, holding in his hand a catalogue, perhaps referring to Durand's interest in the National Academy of Design. Loose, spontaneous brushwork, hinting at materials rather than defining them with sharp precision, show just how far the first generation of Romantic painters had departed from 18th century ideals.

To most 20th century Americans the name of Samuel F. B. Morse (1791-1872) would call to mind the inventor of the telegraph. However, until he was past the age of forty-five he was primarily a painter. His years at Andover and Yale were undistinguished; he was much more interested in the sketches he could do in his spare time. Finally, at age twenty-two parental consent was given and Morse left for London and study with Washington Allston, who instilled in him the desire to paint the historical-romantic subject that was to remain with him the rest of his career.

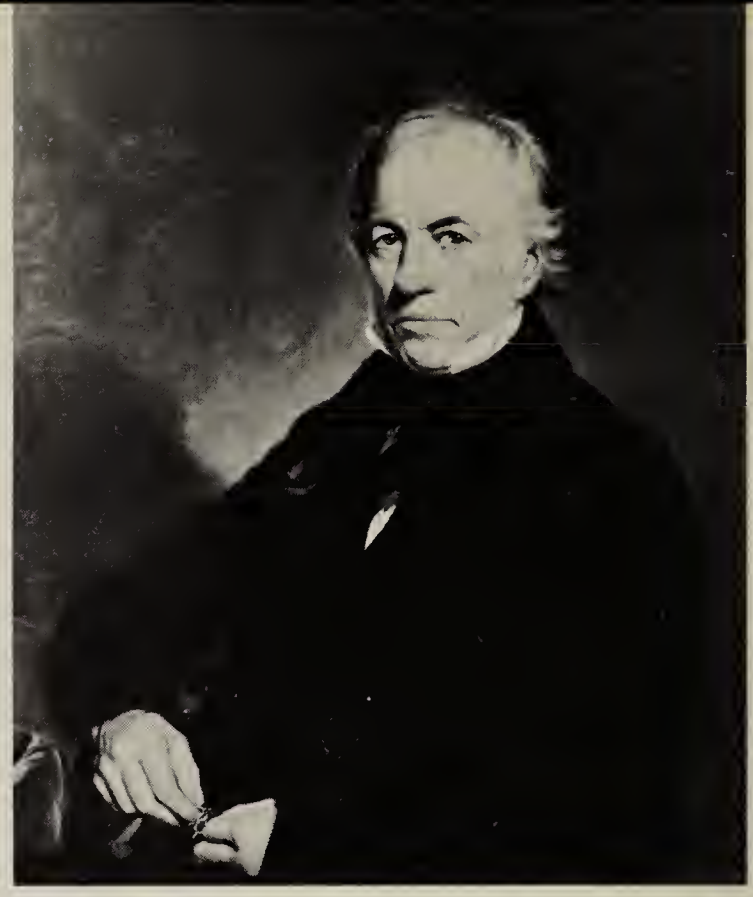
During those busy, ambitious years in London Morse wrote to his parents of his wish to rival Raphael, Michelangelo, and Titian—to become the brightest star in his country. "I cannot be happy unless I am pursuing the intellectual branch of the art," he wrote. "Portraits have none of it; landscape has some of it; but history has it wholly."

Morse was not surprised to find that the American public was not interested in history painting in 1815, the year of his return from London. As he had feared, he had to "settle down as a mere portrait painter." Even portrait commissions were not as forthcoming in Boston as Morse would have wished. Patronage was better touring the small towns of New England and still better in Charleston, South Carolina, where he spent the winter of 1818. A head-and-shoulders portrait would bring $60 to $80, and with 150 commissions, one season alone might earn Morse as much as $9,000.

His style changed to accommodate the Charlestonian, utilizing fresher, livelier color, and satin drapery behind the sitter. The Museum's *Portrait of Miss Emma Gordon Shields* was painted between 1818-1821, while Miss Shields, a belle of New Orleans, was visiting relatives in Charleston. The portrait shows that Morse, while not painting what interested him most, could create a competent composition with a skillfully drawn figure that was pleasant and charming. The rose held so lightly by graceful fingers, the obvious love of paint texture in Miss Shields' delicate gown and figured shawl, and the sympathetic treatment of the subject distinguish it for an era notorious for many dull and even ugly portraits.

By 1821 patronage in Charleston had declined and Morse returned to New England. The years immediately following his popular portrait of General Lafayette, painted in 1825, were filled with many portrait commissions, an occasional

CHARLES LORING ELLIOTT. *Portrait of Electa C. Rhoades. Oil on canvas. Gift of Edward H. Rhoades and William H. Rhoades, 1952. 34 x 28 inches.*



CHARLES LORING ELLIOTT. *Portrait of Samuel Rhoades. Oil on canvas. Gift of Edward H. Rhoades and William H. Rhoades, 1952. 34 x 28 inches.*

landscape, and even a few historical subjects. The National Academy of Design was founded in New York City in 1826, and Morse became its first and long-continuing President.

In this same year Morse, as well as Sully, Doughty, Vanderlyn and Cole, was hired by Colonel James Stevens of Hoboken to do pictures for his Hudson River steamboat, *Albany,* a luxury steamer put into service between New York and Albany on April 11, 1827. Prior to 1824, a steamboat monopoly had been controlled by Robert Livingston and Robert Fulton, but was declared illegal by the United States Supreme Court. The subject for the painting, *Una and the Dwarf,* was from Spencer's *The Fairie Queene.* In this tale, Una, (representing truth) searched for the Redcrosse Knight (representing holiness), and learned of his capture by a giant from the Knight's page, a "woeful Dwarfe." Prince Arthur and his squire came to his aid and released him from the giant's dungeon.

The story was a familiar one to Morse. As a student in London he had read Spencer, Dante, and Chaucer, and he was a frequent visitor to the theater where medieval-romantic tales were the popular attraction. In the center of this panel that once adorned the Albany's picture gallery the Prince stands covered from top to toe in glittering armor, a balldrick across his chest "that shined like twinkling stars with stones most precious rare." Lying at their feet, the discarded armor of the Redcrosse Knight tells much of the story of the vanished warrior. With imagined subjects such as this Morse could display the same love of feminine finery, lustrous hair, and sparkling detail that he reveals in his best portraits.

That Morse was anxious to succeed in this venture was indicated in a letter to his mother. He wrote: "I have an historical picture to paint, which will occupy

me for some time, for a proprietor of a steamboat which is building in Philadelphia, to be the most splendid ever built. He has engaged historical pictures of Allston, Vanderlyn, Sully, and myself, and landscapes of the principal landscape painters, for a gallery on board the boat. I consider this a new and noble channel for the encouragement of painting, and in such an enterprise and in such company I shall do my best."

Portraiture remained the main form of painting from which artists could make a living in mid 19th century America. Nearly every city had its resident artist and competition was keen. It was with this in mind that John Trumbull advised one of his pupils, Charles Loring Elliott (1812-1868) to follow his father's profession, architecture. Elliott was much too interested in painting, however, to turn to another occupation. Trumbull and another teacher, John Quidor, had instilled in him the desire which, combined with talent, would later make him one of the leading portrait painters of his day.

Waldo had opened his New York studio and Morse was studying with West and Allston in London when Charles Elliott was born in Scipio, New York, in 1812. He was of the next generation in youth only. He admired Gilbert Stuart, and his study with Trumbull and Quidor carried him along the path of traditional portraiture. Landscape held little interest for him (he is known to have painted only one), and history painting even less. His approach to the portrait was that of refining old conventions. Variations of light and shade, differences of textures, the lines of age in the face—these were what interested him most.

Apparently, Elliott never went abroad, and even though he spent ten years early in his career as an itinerant painter of portraits in central New York State, his technique was not provincial. His productivity was amazing. Still more remarkable in view of the staggering number of his portraits (reputedly over 700 in his lifetime) is the general level of excellence found in his work.

The *Portraits of Samuel and Electa Cleveland Rhoades,* painted in the spring of 1836, were given to the Toledo Museum of Art by Edward H. Rhoades and William H. Rhoades, descendants of the sitters. Both portraits are of the half-length type. The figures are posed in simple, relaxed positions, the drawing is firm, and the oil paint has been used freely to create solid forms. Fresh, clean colors further enhance the attractiveness of the two pictures.

Charles Loring Elliott was a methodical worker and a careful craftsman. He wanted to capture the likeness rather than the character of the sitter, including in his portraits items of small importance to any but those for whom the work was commissioned. One such example shown in the *Portrait of Samuel Rhoades* was the old gentleman's habit of clasping his watch chain while he spoke. This direction toward naturalism, simplicity of arrangement, and crisp handling was not the result of the recent discovery of the daguerreotype, but a very definite continuation of the fondness for the absolute that can be traced steadily through American portraiture from Smibert, Feke, and Copley to Elliott.

Elliott's portraits sought the exact likeness; they do not unnecessarily flatter the sitter. In fact, Elliott considered it a great compliment when a grandson of Samuel Rhoades one day enthusiastically shouted "Grandpa!" when first shown the portrait. After working in central New York, painting many portraits for twenty dollars each, he settled in New York City and became a member of the National Academy of Design. After the death of Henry Inman, he became the leading portrait painter of the community. He remained there until just before his death in 1868, painting in the same straightforward style that changed but little through the years.

James H. Slayman

THOMAS COLE. *The Architect's Dream. Oil on canvas. Signed on capital: "Painted by T. Cole for I. Town Archt. 1840." Gift of Florence Scott Libbey, 1949. 54 x 84 inches.*

THE ARTIST LOOKS AT NATURE

To the 19th century New England citizen, familiar only with literal, topographical engravings of country estates and river harbors, the Hudson River School presented a refreshingly imaginative and picturesque view of nature. These artists enjoyed unprecedented prosperity as the first school of landscape painters in the United States. Their patrons, the flourishing merchants and industrial leaders of the country, eagerly sponsored endeavors to express pictorially their pride in the recent conquest of our vast continent.

Although the Hudson River School was not an organized movement, the artists within this group felt united by a common enthusiasm and naïve affection for the

wild and rustic beauties of the Catskill Mountains. Primarily untutored, they depicted nature with a meticulous, descriptive realism softened by delicate modulations of tone. Such clarity, precision, and poetic sentiment were in part concessions to the public taste for simple, easily understood pictures which could rival the engraving and photograph in accuracy of detail. Their paintings were even reproduced as engravings and lithographs in such almanacs and gift albums as *The Talisman* and *The Magnolia,* which frequently eulogized the beauties of American scenery.

These publications, together with the travelogues and essays of Bryant, Emerson, and Irving, helped to popularize the Hudson River landscapes as nothing else could. Artist and writer both viewed nature with the eyes of the 19th century romantic, finding spiritual inspiration and sustenance in a universe where every fern and towering oak revealed to them the handiwork of God.

One of the first American artists to express such pantheistic philosophies through art was Thomas Doughty (1793-1856), whose name is firmly linked with the origin and development of the Hudson River School. In *View near Cornwall-on-Hudson* fisherman and cowherd, in rapt communion with nature, gaze at the quiet waters of the Hudson River, meandering through gently rolling hills of the Catskills. Doughty was at his best when painting such intimate, tranquil river views, where sailboats drift into the silvery haze, feathery silhouettes of nearby foliage framing the peaceful vista.

Doughty forsook his prosperous leather business at the age of twenty-seven to become the first professional landscape painter America had known. His venturesome spirit led him from Boston to Europe in 1837 and again in 1845, when he painted the river scenery of the Thames and the Seine. His early success waning, Doughty spent the last years of his life in neglect and poverty in New York City, where he met Asher Brown Durand (1796-1886), who became one of the two leaders of the Hudson River School. Durand's election as president, 1845-1861, of the National Academy of Design, the central art organization of that period, is indicative of the extraordinary position of esteem to which landscape painting had at last arisen.

Durand did not become a landscape painter until he was almost forty. Appren-

ASHER B. DURAND. *Artist Sketching in a Landscape. Oil on canvas. Gift of Florence Scott Libbey, 1947. 26 x 40 inches.*

SANFORD R. GIFFORD. *Lake Nemi. Oil on canvas. Gift of Florence Scott Libbey, 1957. 40 x 60 inches.*

ticed in 1812 to the engraver Peter Maverick, he first established himself as the outstanding engraver of his day. His popular reproductions of Trumbull's historical paintings and of landscapes by Doughty and Thomas Cole were published in many magazines and gift annuals. He further distinguished himself as a capable painter of portraits, allegories, literary and allegorical pieces. After traveling to Europe in 1840, Durand returned to the Berkshires and Adirondacks to specialize in landscape painting, for "the rocks, trees, and green meadows of Hoboken . . . have a charm that all Switzerland cannot boast . . ."

Like Emerson and Thoreau, who sought a mystical union with God through nature, Durand took to the woods, making detailed studies in oil in preparation for his finished paintings. *Artist Sketching in a Landscape*, probably executed after his return from Europe, records this experience. In contrast to Doughty's lyrical and ingenuous charm, Durand's painting reveals a more direct and vigorous temperament, interested in a straightforward, honest representation of rural beauty. Crisp soldity of form and structure has been achieved with minute, precise brush strokes, revealing a fondness for the detailed authenticity visible in his earlier engravings. The graceful, flowing curves of swaying elms are echoed in the winding pathway leading to distant hills. Painting out of doors led Durand to a masterful interpretation of evening light as it filters through dense foliage, shimmers over calm waters, and casts a pale glow upon the surrounding pasture.

In the monumental paintings of Thomas Cole (1801-1848) new elements of the dramatic and the grandiose are blended with the lyrical romantic realism of his predecessors. Born in Lancashire, England, Cole revealed his European temperament in the picturesque architectural motifs frequently appearing in his work. Moving to America in 1817, Cole became a poet, engraver, and portraitist before the mid-1820's, when he settled at Catskill, New York. Here he devoted himself

to landscape and allegorical painting, which firmly established his leadership of the Hudson River School.

The *Vesper Hymn: An Italian Twilight* was painted in 1841 during Cole's second trip to Europe. Beneath the magnetic attraction of Italy lay a desire for the classical heritage, both architectural and spiritual, denied to one living in the primitive wilderness of America. Within this elysian landscape of reverie sits a troubadour playing ballads before an ancient shrine. The sparkling brook, following a river gorge to the sea, leads the eye through an idyllic landscape of rocky crags and ivy-covered castle ruins, beneath which a pair of lovers and a returning shepherd enjoy the golden sunset. Typical of Cole's dramatic art are the twisted, writhing branches of gnarled trees, described in agitated brush strokes which give the painting a vibrant texture, especially in highlights.

The mystic appeal of symbolism and man's fancied flights of communion with the past have never been more excitingly presented in American art than in Cole's, *The Architect's Dream*. Painted in 1840 on commission by Ithiel Town, the noted architect and proponent of revival styles in America, the painting presents a dreamed vision of the ancient past. Brilliantly colored sacrificial rites take place amidst Egyptian pyramids and Greek and Roman marble structures of fantastic proportions. Surrounded by heavy volumes and architectural plans, a young architect conjures up this scene and that of a Gothic church nestled among trees and shrubs. Although Town apparently never accepted the picture, this peep into a world of make-believe clearly expresses today the 19th century Hudson River School concern for allegory and history as well as nature's beauties.

Viewing Cole's paintings stimulated Sanford Robinson Gifford (1823-1880) to become a landscape painter. Also attracted by picturesque ancient ruins, Gifford made three trips to Europe, traveling as far as Athens and the Nile. The pictorial records of his excursions vividly indicate that Hudson River School artists delved beyond the geographical confines of a particular American region. The School, then, represents an attitude of mind, an intuitive vision common to all of them. *Lake Nemi*, painted in 1856-1857 on his first European voyage, is a tranquil, rather pensive view of the countryside southeast of Rome. The high viewpoint allows one to gaze into the depths of a mist-shrouded valley, as well as over vast plains bordering the ocean. Handling space in less flamboyant and theatrical terms than Cole, Gifford proved himself a master of aerial perspective.

The vastness of this untamed country was suggested by Gifford in a painting of 1860, *In the Wilderness*. Remoteness and prehistory are characterized by the figures of two solitary Indians silhouetted against the mirror-like river and by man's minuteness in nature. Gifford's inspiration probably came from some hog-back mountain in the Catskills or Helderbergs of New England, but the Plains Indians and forestation imply a more western locale. His broad, expansive format are the 19th century equivalent of a wide angle camera lens.

Both of Gifford's paintings are executed in a style (titled by noted author E. P. Richardson, "American Luminism") similar to the French Impressionists, popular among later generations of Hudson River masters. Newly discovered chemical pigments liberated artists the world over from the sober palette of earth and vegetable hues, permitting the Impressionists their study of light through rich and varied color and the Luminists their radiant atmospheric works through delicate value variations within a limited range of bright hues. Gifford's Luminism, combining the clean, precise outlines of the Romantic realists with poetic observation of aerial tone and value, evolved naturally from the earlier tonal paintings of Doughty, Durand, and Cole.

Margaret C. Whitaker

HIRAM POWERS. *Portrait of Heloise Durant Rose. Marble. Signed on back: "H. Powers, Sculp." Gift of William E. Levis, 1951. Height 18½ inches.*

A PORTRAIT BUST BY HIRAM POWERS

American sculptors were seldom located in America 100 years ago. Rome and Florence, Italy, were the more likely haunts of men who left this country for competent teaching, Carrara marble, and the pleasures of inexpensive living. Forming one of the fascinating episodes in American art, young men who frequently were unacquainted with the crudest form of painting or carving migrated from farms and river cities to the Italian teaching studios of sculptors working in the popular Neo-Classic style.

Prominent among 19th century American sculptors was Hiram Powers (1805-1873), onetime inventor and mechanic in a Cincinnati waxworks museum. In his mature years he was the most famous American artist at home or abroad. People reflected on the beauty of symbolic message in Powers' *Greek Slave*, a sculpture suggesting Turkish tyranny in the Balkans, but were reluctant to accept her nudity. It was his major work. Today it typifies the 19th century standard of sculptural competence and content.

Although ideal sculpture like the *Greek Slave* secured his fame, Powers is best represented as an artist by the many portrait busts of Americans who flocked to his Florence studio. One of these sensitive likenesses is that of Heloise Durant Rose, daughter of the builder of the Union Pacific Railroad, who posed for the sculptor in 1871. The busts of Heloise and her brother were reportedly the last ones Powers made from life. According to the custom employed by sculptors in the 19th century, Powers made a clay model of the sitter from which Italian stonecutters could carve in marble.

Absent in this work are the Victorian sentimentalities and symbolisms of much of his sculpture. Remaining is a rendering more faithful, perhaps, than a daguerreotype, for it provides the reality of the third dimension. These sensitive and unpretentiously modelled sculptures provided Powers with the major portion of his income and recorded what we most admire today in 19th century American sculpture.

Millard F. Rogers, Jr.

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